

VZCZCXRO1619
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHKUK RUEHROV
DE RUEHAM #2516/01 3221513
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 181513Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6299
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 0388
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 002516

SIPDIS
NOFORN

DEPT FOR NEA/ELA MGREGONIS
DEPT FOR S/P BEHRMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN: POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT FURTHERS CAIRO
SPEECH GOALS (3 OF 4)

REF: A. AMMAN 1676
[1](#)B. AMMAN 2053
[1](#)C. AMMAN 2385
[1](#)D. AMMAN 2487
[1](#)E. AMMAN 2515

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This cable is the third of four cables following up on the October visit to Amman of NSC Senior Director for Global Engagement Pradeep Ramamurthy. It outlines aspects of Embassy Amman's efforts to advance goals emphasized in the President's June 4 speech in Cairo.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) SUMMARY: Since President Obama's June 4 speech in Cairo, Embassy Amman's political engagement and outreach have focused on five areas of priority outlined by the President -- countering violent extremism, fostering Middle East peace, promoting democracy, promoting religious freedom, and improving the status of women. Senior embassy officials have maintained sustained engagement with Jordanian leadership in a comprehensive approach to Middle East peace. The Embassy has also begun a gradual process of reestablishing contacts with Jordan's Islamist groups. Political engagement on human rights, religious freedom, and the status of women has produced tangible results in the form of better laws and regulations. Training programs in these same areas have enhanced implementation of new laws and broadened understanding throughout Jordan's bureaucracy. END SUMMARY.

Countering Extremism/Engaging Islamists

[1](#)3. (S/NF) On June 4 President Obama called for a new beginning in dialogue with people of the Muslim faith on the basis that we all suffer from violence by extremists. The Embassy has begun a quiet yet deliberate process of reestablishing contacts with Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood (JMB) and the Islamic Action Front (IAF) political party, relationships that have languished since September 11, 2001 (reftel C). The result has been a better understanding of the organization, financing, and political and social aspirations of Jordan's major Islamist groups.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) In meetings, JMB/IAF members have offered candid views of United States policy in the region, the Middle East Peace Process, and their perceived role in Jordanian society. The engagement had been viewed by some members of the JMB/IAF as a positive step towards making good on President Obama's promise of sincere and open dialogue with the Muslim world.

15. (S/NF) JMB and IAF members have indicated they are eager for more robust engagement in time. For example, they are interested in participating in people-to-people exchanges that would give them more exposure to American society and values and provide them with an opportunity to express their own views and aspirations to both American leaders and citizens.

Middle East Peace

16. (S/NF) President Obama noted the tension caused by the situation between Israelis, Palestinians, and the Arab world. Jordan plays a key role in the peace process and engagement on this issue has been on-going at the most senior levels. Senior Embassy officials meet with the King and other senior members of the Royal Court to encourage the King to publicly endorse President Obama's goals for the peace negotiations and to encourage the King's private efforts to generate support among his counterparts in the region.

Democracy and Human Rights

17. (U) In his speech, the President outlined the democratic principles of civil liberties and respect for human rights shared by all peoples in the world. The Embassy has expanded its engagement with the Government of Jordan to improve its human rights record. The Embassy maintains an open and frank human rights dialogue with government agencies, civil

AMMAN 00002516 002 OF 003

society, and a range of institutions. For example, the Embassy holds regular meetings with officials from the Ministry of Interior and Public Security Directorate to discuss a range of issues, including prison reform, citizenship rights, and detention procedures. The government regularly requests and receives training or other assistance to further explore reform initiatives or improvements to its human rights record.

18. (U) Political engagement led to Jordan's improvement of its human trafficking record and the passage of a strong new anti-trafficking law, which became effective in March 2009. Jordan was subsequently removed from the Department's Trafficking-in-Persons (TIP) Watch List in 2009. Now the Embassy is partnering with the GOJ to implement the law. In partnership with G/TIP and the Department of Justice, the Embassy has delivered training to labor inspectors and judges. Political engagement with the Jordanian National TIP Committee is also leading to the establishment of a shelter plan for victims, development of a national TIP strategy, and formation of a TIP investigation unit.

19. (C) With a strong regulatory framework now in place, Jordan is ready to focus on prevention and prosecution and to implement victims assistance programs. Increased resources would enhance our ability to partner with Jordan in three areas: (a) training to inspectors, police, prosecutors, and judges, (b) outreach to companies and employers to ensure compliance with the new anti-trafficking law and increase awareness about penalties, and (c) the implementation of more comprehensive victim's assistance programs.

110. (C) The Embassy has also engaged on the issue of free speech. In June, the Jordanian poet and journalist Islam Samhan was convicted of "slandering Islam" and "insulting religious sentiment" for his use of Koranic verses in his book of poems. Embassy engagement with the Ministry of Justice led to senior-level review of the case to ensure that correct legal procedures were followed and to date Mr. Samhan has not been imprisoned. The case also has served as vehicle for discussing constraints to media freedom, helping to sensitize officials and social leaders on free speech issues.

Religious Freedom

¶11. (C) In Cairo, the President spoke of the tradition of tolerance that is at the core of major religious faiths. The Government of Jordan has worked in the last 30-years to create a moderate infrastructure of religious institutions that promote interfaith dialogue and understanding between sects, especially between Muslims and Christians. (reftel B)

For example, Jordan established the Aal Al Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, the Royal Academy for Inter-Faith Studies, and has hosted several visits by the Pope, most recently in April 2009. Program engagement with these Jordanian institutions would open new opportunities to increase religious tolerance and freedom in Jordan through initiatives at the community-level and with youth.

¶12. (C) Political engagement with Jordan on the subject of religious freedom is focused, in part, on legal discrimination experienced by members of minority religious groups, such as the Druze, Baha'i, and Christian denominations not recognized by the GOJ. The Embassy is also working with the Ministry of Interior to remove religious designations from national identification cards and other public documents.

Status of Women

¶13. (C) The President said the United States would partner with countries to enhance equality for women. Honor crimes and domestic violence remain a significant challenge in Jordan, which experienced 20 killings of women in the name of honor between January and November 2009. Studies have also shown that approximately one third of Jordanian women have experienced domestic violence at one point in their lives. Political engagement and USAID rule of law programs on the subject of honor crimes have resulted in judicial changes, including the establishment of a special Honor Crimes Tribunal, amendments to the criminal code that limit the ability of judges to reduce sentences, and improvements in the Personal Status and Labor Laws. A year ago, perpetrators

AMMAN 00002516 003 OF 003

typically received six-month sentences as judges deemed the perpetrators had acted in a "fit of fury." Now perpetrators are being convicted of murder. The Tribunal, in its first ruling, did not reduce jail time despite the victim's family request. Embassy engagement with NGOs has also led key religious figures to speak out against the practice, empowered NGOs to advocate for reform of the penal code, and raised awareness, particularly among rural women.

¶14. (C) Political engagement, coupled with assistance from INL and USAID, is resulting in improvements to the investigation and prosecution of domestic violence and assistance to victims. For instance, amendments to the penal code have been submitted for Parliament's consideration that increases penalties for domestic violence and child abuse. Assistance is targeted to assist the Public Security Directorate's specialized Family Protection Unit and Criminal Investigation Department and the prosecution to better work with victims and investigate cases. Over 50 per cent of graduates of Jordan's Judicial Institute are women.

¶15. (S/NF) Engagement with the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) has resulted in the establishment and strengthening of the JAF's Women's Directorate which focuses on recruitment, training, promotion, and retention of women in the Jordanian military. As a result of the engagement, a specialized unit which focuses on counter-terrorism strategies with Jordanian women has been formed. In 2009, the JAF's most senior

ranking female officer was recently sent on a year-long Counter-Terrorism training program at the National Defense University. In 2010, \$600,000 in Jordan's security assistance funds will be reserved specifically for training women in the armed forces.

Beecroft